

**Rhode Island State Planning Council**  
**Draft Minutes of Thursday, August 28, 2014 Meeting**  
William E. Powers Building  
Conference Room A  
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

**I. ATTENDANCE**

**1. Members Present**

Mr. Steven Hartford, Chair	Director of Administration
Mr. Kevin Flynn, Secretary	Associate Director, Division of Planning
Mr. Bob Azar	Representing Mr. Ruben Flores-Marzan, Planning Director, Providence Department of Planning and Development
Ms. Meredith Brady	Representing Mr. Michael Lewis, Director, RI Department of Transportation
Ms. Janet Coit	Director, RIDEM
Ms. Sharon Conard-Wells	West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation
Mr. Grover Fugate	Executive Director, RI Coastal Resources Management Council
Mr. Thomas Mullaney	RI Department of Administration, Budget Office
Ms. Amy Rainone	Representing Mr. Richard Godfrey, Executive Director Rhode Island Housing
Mr. Jan Reistma	Governor's Policy Office
Mr. Peder Schaefer	Representing Mr. Daniel Beardsley, Executive Director, RILOCAT
Mr. Samuel Shamoon	Governor's Designee
Ms. Rachel Sholly	Representing Ms. Marion Gold, Director, RI Office of Energy Resources
Mr. Mark Therrien	Representing Mr. Raymond Studley, RIPTA
Mr. John Trevor	Environmental Advocate
Dr. Bob Vanderslice	Representing Dr. Michael Fine, Director RI Department of Health
Mr. Marcel Valois	RI Economic Development Corporation
Ms. Janet White-Raymond	Public Member
Mr. Scott Wolf	Environmental Advocate

## 2. **Members Absent**

Ms. Jeanne Boyle	President's Designee, RILOCAT
Ms. Ana Cano-Morales	Public Member
Ms. Jeanne Cola	Chair, RI Housing Resources Commission
Mr. Roy Coulombe	Public Member
Mr. L. Vincent Murray	RILOCAT, Government Official Representative
Ms. Anna Prager	Public Member

## 3. **Guests**

Mr. Michael Walker	RI Economic Development Corporation
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## 4. **Staff – Division of Planning**

Ms. Melanie Jewett Army	Supervising Planner, Statewide Planning Program
Mr. Jeff Davis	Principal Planner, Statewide Planning Program
Ms. Siobhan O'Kane	Principal Planner, Statewide Planning Program
Mr. Jared Rhodes	Chief, Statewide Planning Program
Ms. Dawn Vittorioso	Executive Assistant, Division of Planning

## II. **AGENDA ITEMS**

### 1. **Call to Order**

Chairman Hartford called the meeting to order on August 28, 2014 at 9:03 a.m. He took a moment to reintroduce himself and thanked everyone for their attendance and efforts.

### 2. **Approval of the August 28, 2014 Meeting Minutes** – *for vote*

Mr. Hartford asked for a motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 28, 2014. Mr. Shamoon moved to approve the minutes of August 28, 2014 as submitted. The motion was seconded by Ms. Rainone. There was no further discussion and the motion passed unanimously.

### 3. **Public Comment on Agenda Items**

There was none.

### 4. **RhodeMap RI Draft Economic Development Plan** – *for discussion*

Next, Mr. Hartford introduced Mr. Kevin Flynn who delivered an informational PowerPoint presentation (attachment 1). Upon completion of the formal presentation, he referred to the updated Economic Development Plan Goals, Policies and Strategies document as contained in the Council's packet and explained the key changes that were made and where the content was derived. He then began the

discussion with ED Goal 1: Provide educational and training opportunities to activate a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. The Council engaged in the following discussion:

Mr. Fugate asked if the state's unique educational assets such as oceanography, marine, pharmaceutical and design programs should be emphasized under this goal. Mr. Davis indicated that they are represented under goal 3. Mr. Flynn said that staff will review it again to ensure that we are providing the emphasis needed.

Ms. White Raymond suggested reviewing the business survey that was recently completed by the Governor's Workforce Board (GWB). Mr. Rhodes noted that staff recently received that information and was in the process of reviewing it for potential incorporation into the report.

Mr. Wolf referred to strategy 1C, *Expand and increase the number of university-business engagement centers modeled after University of Rhode Island's recent successful efforts* and asked how a university-business engagement center differs from small business centers. Mr. Valois noted that this information was derived from URI's Executive Director, Katharine Hazard Flynn's model and explained that Business Engagement Centers (BEC) serve as a "front-door" to companies and businesses looking to engage with the University for any purpose; including seeking students for internships, sponsoring research, accessing information on technology transfer, taking advantage of conference planning services, workforce development and other vital areas. In addition, Mr. Valois said that the Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) and Polaris Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP), which are direct services for small businesses and manufactures in the state are serviced through URI's Research Foundation, which is RI's lead agency.

Next, Mr. Wolf asked for clarification on the suggested awareness campaign. Mr. Flynn explained that the intent is primarily focused on getting the word out regarding career path opportunities here in the Ocean State.

Mr. Flynn asked if there were any further comments or questions. There being none, Mr. Flynn moved to the next goal.

ED Goal 2: Create an inclusive economy that targets opportunity to typically underserved populations.

Mr. Hartford noted that the Department of Administration is in the process of hiring a Diversity Director for the first time ever and indicated that new initiatives regarding contracting/purchasing will be initial priorities for that position.

Mr. Valois suggested revisiting the notion to "create" an economy as written in goal 2. The Council in general supported replacing the word "create" with something along the lines of promoting or fostering support.

Mr. Hartford questioned whether Commerce RI would be supportive of providing a tax incentive for hiring individuals with limited career opportunities. Mr. Valois said that Commerce RI would support the idea

and then referenced the Micro-Zone Economic Revitalization Act that was introduced during the last session as an example.

Mr. Valois referred to the strategy, *Require banks seeking to do business with the State to demonstrate a strong small business lending track record within the state* and suggested changing the word “require” as he felt it was too strong since some banks who may do business with the state may not be in the business of small-business lending. Mr. Flynn said that staff would make the necessary edit.

Ms. Conard-Wells referred to the strategy, *Support the expansion of LISC’s Financial Opportunity Centers beyond Providence* and requested that the language be broadened to not only focus on LISC, but to reflect that there are other entities who are doing this sort of work as well.

Ms. Sholly suggested that the Plan should emphasize that wages and salaries should also be equitable for underserved populations. Mr. Flynn noted that staff would incorporate the suggested language.

Mr. Reitsma asked Mr. Flynn to consider adding additional institutions who could also play a role in workforce development and training. In response, Mr. Flynn said that it is mentioned in the latter part of the Plan but noted staff would review to determine if it should be listed within this section as well.

As there were no further questions or comments Mr. Flynn moved to the next goal.

### *ED Goal 3: Support industries and investments that play to Rhode Island’s strengths*

Mr. Hartford referred to F1 *Increase the impact potential of the tourist economy; Create a steady and predictable funding mechanism* and questioned what the funds would be used for. Mr. Flynn indicated that this came from the Intersections report and that the funds would be used to promote tourism and to develop a brand. Mr. Valois added that it would primarily be focused on branding and marketing. Ms. Coit suggested adding additional content to the language to ensure that the intended purpose is clear and said that the goal seems to be missing emphasis on RI’s expertise in composites. Ms. Coit then referred to 3B *Strengthen and support Rhode Island’s burgeoning food system business, which span agriculture and fishing, food processing/manufacturing, and sales* and suggested adding strategies relative to marketing RI’s food economy and the food that is raised, grown and caught in RI.

Mr. Fugate suggested a strategy of protecting and nurturing RI’s marine economy. He then referred to strategy *Strengthen and support Rhode Island’s burgeoning food system business, which span agriculture and fishing, food processing/manufacturing, and sales* and suggested referencing aquaculture. Next, he noted that Type VI waters protect RI’s valuable industrial/commercial waterfronts; prohibiting construction to those areas. He then expressed his concern that tourism is RI’s most important sector and the most susceptible to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise.

Mr. Azar referred to strategy *Transition to a knowledge, innovation, and technology driven economy geared to greener, more sustainable outcomes; Pursue collaborations with our universities to continue innovation in the fields of design, ocean science, bioscience, neuroscience and medtech industry sectors* and

suggested adding hospitals. He then expressed concern that when discussing property tax, it should be clear that it is a local issue.

Mr. Reitsma referred to strategy *Increase the impact potential of the tourist economy* and reflected that our situation regarding tourism is an old one and said that the proposed strategies are not new. He then questioned what is going to be different this time. Mr. Hartford expressed his sentiment that the strategies are still valid and that the difference lies in the state's commitment to implementation. Mr. Rhodes asked Mr. Reitsma how he would characterize the issue. Mr. Reitsma specified that perhaps a detailed review and strategic process for the tourism industry should be undertaken. Mr. Valois explained that from his perspective, the issue relates to RI's disinvestment in tourism and the resulting loss of market share. He also noted that the suggested strategic planning exercise has been completed in the past but has essentially been shelved and that this is where we need to pick the issue up and start moving forward through reinvestment. Ms. Coit suggested that perhaps the language could be made a little stronger such as capitalize on RI's iconic places. She also suggested that there is an opportunity to emphasize that stewardship of these assets is critical.

Ms. White-Raymond questioned whether the business attraction website, GreaterRI.com, could be highlighted somewhere in the plan; preferably in Goal 3 or 6. In response, Mr. Davis said that the Plan will have call out boxes to highlight things that are occurring throughout the state and noted that the GreaterRI.com website would fit perfectly with the content.

Ms. Conard-Wells referred to *Strengthen and support Rhode Island's burgeoning food system businesses, which span agriculture and fishing, food processing/manufacturing, and sales* and noted the disconnects she has experienced between local, state and federal policies. The example she identified was the inability for individuals receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to purchase certain items at Farmer's Markets etc., which affects sales.

There being no further questions or comments Mr. Flynn moved to the next goal.

#### ED Goal 4: Create great places by coordinating economic, housing and transportation investments

Mr. Wolf referred to A1 and suggested adding the provision of guidance to local municipalities as to how to utilize the programmatic tools that are already in place such as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and the New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program. Mr. Davis indicated that he thought it was in the narrative and said that he would double check and add it if it wasn't already there. Mr. Reitsma questioned whether there are existing capacities that could be bolstered to perform this function. The conversation then turned to where in state government the office would be situated. Mr. Hartford suggested that perhaps use of the term "office" could be changed to "initiative" so that more focus is placed on function than form.

Ms. Raymond-White expressed her support for *Promote alternative transportation that connects people to housing, jobs and services; Focus on commuter rail service expansion at TF Green InterLink facility while investigating the business development opportunities of an Amtrak stop at the InterLink*. However, she questioned whether the Plan should limit the focus to TF Green's InterLink facility. Mr. Davis noted that

Mr. Devine had made a similar comment at the Technical Committee meeting and said that the appropriate revisions were being made.

Mr. Walker referred to policy A strategies 5 & 6 and noted that the Technical Committee thought that limiting Tax Increment Financing (TIF) and tax stabilization agreements to Growth Centers was inappropriate at this time. In response, Mr. Flynn indicated that staff hasn't had the opportunity to make the necessary edits but planned to do so. Mr. Wolf suggested trying to find ways to incentivize the use of TIFs and tax stabilization agreements within Growth Centers as opposed to saying that they can only be used within Growth Centers.

As there were no further questions or comments Mr. Flynn moved to the next goal.

*ED Goal 5: Create a stronger and more resilient Rhode Island*

Ms. Sholly asked how this Plan will integrate with all the other State Guide Plan Elements; particularly the Energy Plan. She asked if this Plan will be revised after the Energy Plan is adopted. Mr. Flynn asked that the Office of Energy Resources (OER) focus on ensuring that the content of this draft is reflective of the direction that OER is headed in updating the Energy Plan.

Mr. Fugate requested that a strategy be added that calls for the implementation of the Governor's Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council report. With regards to the Biggert-Waters Act, he also suggested an evaluation of RI's existing building stock be called for in the Plan; and that this Plan should call for local and state entities to start reviewing and revising their permitting systems sooner rather than later.

Mr. Reitsma commented that the existing language did not paint a clear picture of the resiliency issues and said that a stronger link to the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council's report should be included. In response, Mr. Flynn indicated that staff would work to strengthen the connection.

Mr. Walker referred to FM Global's presentation that was provided to the Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council about the importance of preparing a business continuity plan. He expressed support for inclusion of this under additional strategies. Mr. Davis indicated that staff is actively working on such content. Mr. Reitsma suggested adding public and private sector collaboration, which would help resources and the Plan's effectiveness.

As there were no further questions or comments Mr. Flynn moved to the next goal.

*ED Goal 6: Make Rhode Island a state where our companies, our workers, and the state as a whole can develop a competitive advantage.*

Ms. White-Raymond questioned whether there is a means for incentivizing municipal regulatory review and streamlining permitting procedures. Mr. Flynn agreed that incentivizing would be ideal; however, he stated that it is difficult to incentivize without offering funding.

Mr. Schaefer referred to *Make Rhode Island's tax structure more simple, competitive and predictable* and noted that strategies related to tangible property taxes are absent from the Plan. Mr. Davis indicated that a statement about property taxes is included in the narrative; however, a strategy is not listed.

Mr. Schaefer expressed his concern for business community's disadvantages due to every municipality having a different tangible tax structure. Mr. Hartford suggested that Mr. Schaefer submit ideas to Mr. Flynn on how to incorporate the tangible tax structure into the Plan and staff will consider the suggestions.

Mr. Flynn concluded and welcomed the Council to submit any addition comments or suggestions to him for consideration.

5. **Associate Director's Report**

Given the time, Mr. Flynn deferred this agenda item.

6. **Other Business**

There was none.

7. **Adjourn**

There being no further discussion Council member White-Raymond motioned to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Council member wolf and approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Kevin Flynn  
Secretary